

Vali Steele was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1985. She is a glass sculptor and mixed media artist with an interest in landscape, and the correlations it has with memories.

Vali grew up hiking, biking, gardening and spending most of her day's outdoors. Many of her adventures took place at her paternal grandparent's country home. This was also where she got her first taste of 'creating' through oil painting with her grandmother, an artist, whom she affectionately called Mama.

The outdoors, trees and especially nature's beauty, have resonated with her since she was a small child. Those fond remembrances have guided her artistic practice throughout her life. Another important place that Vali draws inspiration from is a place called *Old Man's Cave*, close to her hometown of Columbus where she would go hiking. Memories of being surrounded by beautiful enveloping trees, roots, plants, rock cliffs, waterfalls and the peaceful hum of nature fills her soul with happiness. Intriguing, mystifying and overwhelming senses of joy have always come to her in the comfort of the outdoors. These same energies are what drive her work today. Her deep rooted connection with nature and it's ever-lasting beauty have been an alluring quality that she tries to emulate in her work. Trees are a reoccurring subject also seen in her work, not only because she loves them but they are a universal archetype. This symbolism allows viewers to identify and connect their own memories with her artwork.

For Vali, the process of creating work, and the emotional ties that are developed with the materials used, are as important as the final artworks. Within certain geographies, she uses easily found organic matter, as if it were gifted by the place as souvenirs. These remnants often find their way into the corporeal structures of her glass sculptures, memorializing and giving them life within. Vali exploits the natural qualities of all the materials she uses to offer immense aesthetic pleasure in her final artworks.

Vali Steele earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from *Columbus College of Art & Design* in Columbus, Ohio. She studied an array of mediums there with heavy emphasis in glass, photography and ceramics. While earning her Bachelors, Vali studied abroad in Florence, Italy. She was enamored with not only the incredibly beautiful surroundings and cultural heritage present but also the deep appreciation people have for the abundant historical artworks and architecture within the country. Her studies in art conservation and travels that summer are what drove her to move back to Florence after she finished her degree. After returning, Vali started a post-baccalaureate program earning her Certification for Art Conservation through *Studio Art Centers International* in Florence, Italy. Her path in academia continued after receiving her certification and her love for teaching is what made that decision. Vali then earned her Master of Fine Arts degree with a focus in glass, from *University of Miami* in Coral Gables, Florida. Her research and studies there are what culminated into her thesis exhibition show, *Landscape of Emotions*, truly expressing the landscape artist she is today.

Vali Steele has been the proud recipient of the Dr. Jerrold Belitz Glass Scholarship fund to attend Penland School of Crafts in Penland, NC and scholarships to attend Pilchuck Glass School in Stanwood, WA. She was also awarded with a Teaching Assistantship position during her Graduate Fellowship at the University of Miami, FL in both 2014 and 2015. Furthermore, she

was awarded with Best in Show for Glass in the 2014 Annual Juried Student Exhibition at the Lowe Art Museum in Coral Gables, FL. In addition to these numerous accolades, her piece, *A Winter's Glass Tree*, was also featured in the online platform, Steelyard, for design and branding in 2016. Also, in regards to her conservation work, she was recognized in the published Fall 2011 SACI newsletter, with a full page feature on the restoration of the *Sacred Family* tabernacle in Florence, Italy.

Vali now resides in Orlando, Florida. Her fine art practices are currently steering her into public artwork, making large scale sculptures predominately using glass, metal and wood. Vali also is continuing her pedagogic endeavors at *Factur Makerspace* in Orlando, where she offers classes and oversees the metalshop.